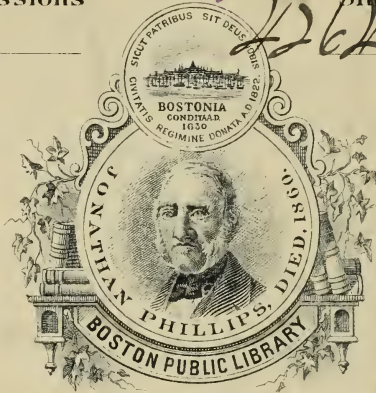




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THE SPEECH

OF

THE RIGHT HON.

STEPHEN LUSHINGTON, M.P.

AGAINST THE PROPOSED ADMISSION OF

SLAVE-GROWN SUGAR

TO

HOME CONSUMPTION

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*THURSDAY, MAY 7th, 1841.*

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LONDON :

EXTRACTED FROM

HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

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1841.

THE HISTORY

OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

FROM THE

EARLIEST PERIOD

TO THE PRESENT

BY

JOHN

HANSON

---

THOMAS CURSON HANSAARD, PATERNOSTER ROW.



## S P E E C H .

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Dr. LUSHINGTON: Circumstanced as I am, I think the House will naturally expect that I should feel it my duty to address a few observations to them; and, undoubtedly, I should have felt that obligation, even if my hon. Friend the Member for Lambeth had not taken upon himself the rather unusual course of forestalling the opinions and statements of a Member of this House, putting them in his own language—language which I altogether disclaim—and striving to cast upon them some degree of ridicule. To that I have been subject for many years, and I feel that it has not done me any injury, in my own opinion or in the opinion of others. With respect to the principle first stated by my hon. Friend, I shall persevere in its assertion, if the hon. Member meant this—that I have ever been the determined enemy of slavery, whether it assumed its most hateful form of the slave-trade which had ravaged the whole western world, involving the murder and bloodshed of thousands of our fellow-creatures, or other forms scarcely less detestable, as it existed in the West-India islands, and as it now exists in the Brazils, where human existence is at the lowest ebb of degraded misery: if the hon. Member meant this, that I have ever expressed my abhorrence of these practices, have ever been their determined opponent, as contrary to the laws of God and of man: if that were what the hon. Member meant, I shall ever stand by

that principle, and the hon. Member states that which I claim as an honour, let who will, think it a subject of ridicule. "But," said my hon. Friend, "what right have we to force our virtuous principles upon other states, to pass an act of uniformity for Spain and the Brazils, and whatever other countries may choose to carry on these dreadful practices?" What right? Why, have we not declared these principles by an Act of Parliament in 1807? Have we not avowed them in Congress in 1815? Have not all the great States of Europe concurred in declaring that the slave-trade was contrary to the justice of man, and the law of God? Have we nothing more to say? Why we have treaties subsisting with every one of the great Powers upon this subject—treaties in which the Brazils are included. Indeed, I lament to say that almost all the treaties which have ever yet been made for the protection of suffering humanity in the case of the Africans—and it is one of the most extraordinary incidents in the history of the world—have been dealt with as though they were waste paper. We have gone to war for possessions which would not pay for their maintenance, and we have allowed treaties for the protection of the rights of humanity to be violated with scarcely a remonstrance. We have a right to the fulfilment of those treaties—we have a right to assert their principles—and the claim which we urge partakes neither of intolerance nor dictation. We have a right, and I say so, after attending to the observations of my hon. Friend, to take measures for the suppression of that which all Europe concurs in stigmatizing as a crying wickedness and iniquity. I am aware, that in approaching the present discussion, it will be truly said, that we must take into consideration many great and important topics. I am

aware of our financial difficulties—I am aware of our commercial difficulties. I am aware that the time may be coming when we shall have to encounter some embarrassments in dealing with foreign governments on commercial subjects. I forget none of these topics. I say them not out of my consideration, but speaking of one measure, and one only—the present proposal of her Majesty's Government—I am prepared to say, that that measure will not remove the difficulties, will not relieve them from the embarrassments under which they now laboured, will lower them in the face of Europe, will degrade them in their own opinions, and will not receive the approval of the suffering people of this country. The measures proposed have reference to sugar, corn, and timber. I have ever been the friend of free trade, I have ever voted for an alteration in the Corn-laws, I maintain that opinion still. I have altered my sentiments with regard to the timber duties; but I have always voted against every measure that tended to increase the Slave-trade or give it fresh rigour. I did so last year, and I am of the same opinion still. If any one had changed, I am not that one. I have not altered one iota of the opinions which I expressed on my hon. Friend, the Member for Wigan's motion, last year. I see no reason to change these opinions now. It was then decided by an immense majority of the House against twenty-seven, that it would not be proper to reduce the duty upon foreign sugar to 34s. when the price was between 50s. and 60s.; and I see no reason to decide that it would be more proper to do it now when the price is from 37s. to 40s. At that time, when we expected that the price would increase, as it undoubtedly did, we did not think it necessary to provide against the contingency of a

failure of the crop, and a very high price. Much less is there the slightest reason for making such provision now, when it is a matter of perfect demonstration that there will be an amply sufficient supply. I will state simply and plainly the grounds upon which I mean to vote, laying aside all party considerations, though I am as much attached to my party, I apprehend, as any living man, and mindful of their conduct with respect to these great questions in former time. I am anxious to repay them with all the fidelity that is consistent with honour and duty. First, I oppose the Government upon this question, because it gives a stimulus to the Slave-trade; secondly, because it will augment the horrors of the existing state of slavery; thirdly, because it is unjust to the West-Indies; fourthly, because it is deleterious to the happiness of the emancipated population; fifthly, because it is not just with reference to the capitalists, who have engaged in the cultivation of sugar in the East Indies; and lastly, because I believe, that there exists no necessity whatever for taking the present course, in order to supply the people of England with sugar. To refer to the last topic first, leaving out of consideration the stock of sugar on hand, which amounts to about 35,000 tons, we have almost a moral certainty, we have at least a right to expect, a supply of 205,000 tons in the course of the year 1841. I speak from the most authentic documents when I estimate the supply from the East Indies 60,000, from the Mediterranean at 30,000 tons, and the remainder, namely, 115 tons, from the West Indies. The actual existing state of importation affords the best data. I will state to the House the import of British sugar for the first four months of 1839, 1840, and 1841. The right hon. and

learned Gentleman quoted the following document :—

## SUGAR.

STATEMENT for GREAT BRITAIN for the First Four Months of 1839, 1840, and 1841.

	IMPORTS.		HOME CONSUMPTION.			EXPORTS.		STOCK, 1st May.	
	1839.	1840.	1841.	1839.	1840.	1841.	1839.	1840.	1841.
Br. W. India, Tons.	19,500	18,500	17,500	55,700	41,100	24,000	..	21,500	9,200
Mauritius ..	12,500	12,200	17,500	7,800	11,500	12,000	..	9,000	6,100
Bengal ..	8,700	8,900	51,000	7,000	7,500	17,000	..	5,200	5,400
Total British .....	40,700	39,400	66,000	50,500	60,100	55,000	..	55,500	20,700
Total Foreign .....	5,800	6,700	14,000	..	..	..	5,300	10,500	14,000
Total Tons ..	44,500	46,100	80,000	50,500	60,100	55,000	5,300	46,000	34,700
							7,600	7,600	70,000

Placing together the West Indies, Mauritius, and Bengal, it appears, that in 1839, the total quantity imported was 40,000 tons, in 1840, 37,400 tons, and in 1841, 66,000 tons. Thus it appears, that in the present year, the produce is nearly double what it was last year. This is a strong and incontrovertible fact; I trusted it would be contradicted, if possible, but it is not possible either to contradict or refute. I hold in my hand a statement from a house of high character in Calcutta, bearing date the 16th of January, 1841, with a postscript of the 13th of February, in which, after stating the actual export, it is remarked that,—

“For the following year it is scarcely possible to say, what may come, if we have a favourable season for manufacturing, our prices will be maintained unless the duties are altered at home, which we rather fear as far as other eastern sugars are concerned, and which are not the produce of slave-labour.”

It is noticed there too, that the crop for the present year is expected to be unusually large. Such is the state of the East Indies; let us now look to the West. In the first place, the unusual droughts have terminated at Guinea, and especially at Barbadoes, and in the great island of Jamaica; and, according to the ordinary range of human occurrences we have no right to expect a repetition of the same calamity. Then peace pervades Jamaica, with an increase of industry; and we have a right to expect free, the fruits of that industry. I have a right to say so, looking to past experience, when, in the little island of Antigua—perhaps the most exhausted of all the islands which Britain possesses—since the abolition of slavery, the exports have increased from 7,000 to 11,000 hogsheads. I see no reason to fear;

if we allow a proper period of time to elapse, they will have in all quarters, the increased production which increased consumption would make necessary. In no one year has there ever been consumed more than 200,000 tons of sugar. I have shown you, that in the present year, you will have 205,000 tons, without regard to the stock on hand. The present price is about 37*s.*, or as follows :—

## SUGAR.

	PRICES IN BOND.	DUTY ABOUT	PRICES TO CONSUMERS.
	<i>s.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>per cent. s.</i>
BENGAL .....	Khaur .... 21 @ 25	25	46 @ 50
.. ..	White .... 34 .. 41	"	59 .. 66
WEST INDIA & } MAURITIUS.. }	Brown .... 31 .. 33	"	56 .. 58
.. ..	Good & Fine 55 .. 49	"	60 .. 66
MANILLA .....	.. 17 .. 21	38	55 .. 59
BRAZIL .....	Brown .... 18 .. 20	"	56 .. 58
.. ..	White .... 21 .. 24	"	59 .. 62
CUBA .....	Brown .... 21 .. 23	"	59 .. 61
.. ..	White .... 24 .. 30	"	62 .. 68
SIAM .....	Brown .... 18 .. 19	"	56 .. 57
.. ..	White .... 21 .. 25	"	59 .. 61
CUBA.....	White .... 62 @ 68 }	Proportion of Saccharine	
BRAZIL....	White .... 59 .. 62 }	Matter, 85 <i>s.</i>	
WEST INDIA .....	60 .. 66 }	65 <i>s.</i>	
EAST INDIA .....	59 .. 66 }		

I ask you whether there is not every reasonable probability, that sugar will be supplied to the people of this country at a reasonable price. The English are great consumers of sugar, notwithstanding its high price. If any man will take the trouble of looking at the whole consumption of sugar through the western world, he will find, that Great Britain takes about one-fourth of all that is consumed. Let us consider for a moment what will be the effect of admitting foreign

sugar. I have been so fortunate as to obtain very recent advices from Cuba, as recent as up to the 1st of April, in this year. From two ports alone, the increase in exportation amount to no less than 9,500 tons; namely, from 24,200 tons, in 1840, to 33,700 tons, in 1841. The ports to which I allude are Havannah and Matanzas. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the following Table:—

COUNTRIES.	SUGAR IN BOXES.			
	FROM HAVANNA.		FROM MATANZAS.	
	1841	1840	1841	1840
England .. .. .	5621	1551	1651	1297
Cowes and a market .. .. .	8628	14482	7909	10545
Russia .. .. .	16987	1822	9195	1224
Sweden and Denmark .. .. .	.. .. .	290	.. .. .	.. .. .
Hamburg .. .. .	6415	19205	9288	11607
Bremen .. .. .	4565	5272	1510	1918
Holland .. .. .	4697	2594	.. .. .	.. .. .
Belgium .. .. .	4729	3526	.. .. .	3001
France { Havre and Bordeaux	596	754	.. .. .	.. .. .
{ Marseille .. .. .	5908	5555	2371	907
Spain .. .. .	21546	10001	5951	5787
Italy .. .. .	1119	1651	2911	.. .. .
New York .. .. .	12845	5165	8117	3178
Boston .. .. .	2855	5087	10244	4202
Charleston, S. C. .. .. .	440	147	19583	2990
New Orleans .. .. .	2270	2659	669	125
Mobile .. .. .	66	488	260	.. .. .
Other parts of the United States .. .. .	2566	1549	5196	999
Various .. .. .	676	619	1514	500
Total .. .. .	100127	77905	68342½	45436

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE EXPORTS OF SUGAR, FROM 1st OF JANUARY, TO 31st MARCH, 1840 & 1841.



How is that increase obtained? By an augmentation of slavery—by employing gangs of males only—by working them out without mercy, refusing them even the ordinary quantity of sleep necessary to sustain human nature. Every man's arm was there lifted against the slave, and the bitterest enmities are excited through this enormous infliction of evil. My hon. Friend has spoken of the advantages of free labour in India; can we institute any comparison between British India and these slave possessions? Has any one of the examples of indigo or cotton put by my hon. Friend any adaptation of the subject now under discussion? He has shown, that the productions of free labour in the East Indies surpass all the efforts of slavery. But my hon. Friend forgot, that in the East Indies the population is enormous in point of number, and the price of labour  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$  a-day, the lowest rate at which man can sustain life, while, in the West Indies, labourers are few, and the price of labour excessively high. I deny, however, that this is a question of free trade. In free trade, there is fair competition between parties who use the same means and appliances to attain the same end. But when have you heard of fair competition between the honest manufacturer and the man who robs on the high road?—between the man who pays just obedience to the laws of his country, and complies with all legal exactions, on the one hand, and the lawless smuggler on the other? Whoever heard of competition, where on one side murder is legalized, and on the other the sacred duties of humanity are reverentially recognized? It is no competition. The result is this; immediate prosperity to the lawless trafficker, and injury to the honest trader; while the ultimate consequences will be heavy indeed even for the wicked themselves.

Humanely speaking, they are working their own ruin. In twenty, thirty, or forty years, as the case may be, they will reduce the finest land, that ever God gave to man to a howling wilderness. We have examples of this in the southern states of America. Mr. Joseph Gurney told me, that he had seen the land in every state of exhaustion, from being worked without rest or manure, reduced to an equality with the sands of the ocean, recovering after a lapse of twenty years, and by degrees, becoming partially restored — when, in every sense, made extinct by the abuse of man, revived by a benevolent process of nature, occupying a quarter of a century. But how will this scheme affect our own colonies? I am not at a loss for evidence. I will refer to the testimony of Mr. Joseph John Gurney, a gentleman who has no interest whatever in this question, of unsuspected character, and great practical knowledge. He travelled through the West Indies and the United States, for the express purpose of acquiring information; and of all the men whom I have ever known, he is the most attached to truth. I happen to have his sentiments in writing upon this subject, given to me before this question was mooted, and I will take the liberty of reading them to the House. The right hon. Gentleman read as follows:—

“ I feel it to be of immense importance to the welfare of our West Indian colonies, and to the cause of humanity, of our maintaining inviolate the present prohibitory scale of duties upon foreign slave-grown sugar. Were these duties to be relaxed, and put upon the same footing as other sugars, the growth of our own colonies, the inevitable consequence would be the ruin of the planters, the loss of daily wages to the liberated negroes, as a compensation for their labour on the establishment, and above all the vastly increased surplus of the Cuba and Brazilian slave-trade.”

This is the statement of one who has no West-Indian interest to influence his judgment ; he had nothing but a sense of justice to guide him. A charge of inconsistency has been brought against those who oppose the present measure, because they consent to consume other articles, the produce of slave labour, and do not protest against the importation of slave grown cotton. I consider that that man gives the greatest proof of wisdom, and is the best friend of humanity, who looks to the practical execution of beneficial measures, and not that man who, not able to attain all the good of which he is desirous, gives up the good which is in his power. He is not a wise man who, because circumstances over which he has no control force him to submit to the evils of resorting to slave countries for certain products, should, because so great a calamity was inflicted on him, by the force of circumstances, take a course which would augment the evil he could not avoid. I have always endeavoured to attain all the practical good in my power throughout the discussion of this question. At first little progress was made, and I sat for years on the opposite benches scarcely expecting success, but I contented myself with working and hoping on, guided by public opinion, first of all bringing about the abolition of slavery—next procuring an amelioration in the condition of the negro—then by endeavouring to procure a gradual abolition of slavery—and at last, when public opinion was ripe, by the total abolition of slavery. The supporters of that measure were contented with the practical good they could effect, and had waited throughout for public opinion. There are some other matters well worthy of attention. I agree with the hon. Member for Beverley that Cuba sugar will enter into the greatest competition with British sugar,

but I believe the Brazilian sugar will also find its way here, and that an encouragement will be given to the importation of slaves, and a great increase in the sufferings of the slaves will be the consequence. But are we quite sure that it will end there? Are we quite sure that the Brazilian government and the Brazilian planters will not be inclined to abandon the cultivation of cotton, which is now partially pursued, and take to the cultivation of sugar? See the course which was formerly pursued. In the West Indies the cultivation of cotton was abandoned, and the cultivation of sugar increased. How can we assure ourselves that it will be for the advantage of this country to depend exclusively for the supply of cotton upon the United States? Sir, I am of opinion that any measure which tend to render us solely and exclusively dependent upon the United States, and to deprive us of the supply of that necessary article from other countries must be most detrimental to the commercial and mercantile interest of this country, and one of the most dangerous courses that England can adopt. I have listened with deep attention to the speech of my noble Friend the Secretary for the Colonies, and cannot forget the pathetic description he gave of the sufferings of the poor of this country. I hope, Sir, that I am not deficient in the most earnest anxiety to relieve those sufferings, and to restore them to a better state. But when that eloquent description of their sufferings was given, and which will now go off to the country exciting their feelings and raising their passions—that description of their suffering from being forced to purchase a dear article may be contrasted with the sufferings of the negroes, which must be the consequence of the adoption of this measure for the relief of our people. When

I sat on the other side of the House, with but few friends to support me, actuated only by the spirit of truth, and when sometimes my courage failed me, I found the feelings of the people of this country rising to my support, encouraging every effort, and stimulating me to fresh exertions and fresh hopes ; and I believe that, if the question were put to the people of this country, whether they would have their sugar cheaper by taking the produce of the labour of the slave, or whether they would suffer their present calamities, I believe they would reject the proposition with disdain. I have such faith in their principles and good feeling, that I believe they would prefer their dinner of herbs to the stalled ox that is offered to them by this measure. I have made these observations to justify myself, and to show my own consistency and adherence to my principle. I deeply regret being obliged to give a vote different from my noble Friend, but I am obliged, on this occasion, to separate from him. If the proposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be put in such a form that I could say no to it, I should be desirous to do so, and as far as the forms of this House would permit, that is the course I should pursue. With regard to the other questions, I will not enter into them. I only rose to vindicate my own opinions, and I am content.

THE END.

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